CROSSGEN COMICS
13
JULY
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MYSTIC
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John Dell • Andrew Crossley

NOW
I'M MAD.

Ooooh, NOW YOU'RE MAD.
I'M SCARED, CAN YOU TELL?
IF I WAS WEARING PANTS, I'D WET MYSELF.
BAD ENOUGH I'M STUCK FIGHTING YOU. WHY DO I HAVE TO *LISTEN* TO YOU?
Aw. DID YOUR FEELINGS GET HURT? GOT YOUR CUTE LITTLE MAGIC ROBES ALL IN A TWIST?
FORGET I MENTIONED IT.
HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN THIS, GIRLIE!
Oh, DON'T WORRY...

...I WILL.
WHAT, THAT?
THAT WAS BETTER?
I'M RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU AND YOU MISSED! YOU COULDN'T HIT THE OCEAN FROM THE BEACH!
IF YOU CAN'T DO THE SIMPLE STUFF HOW DO YOU EVER EXPECT TO—
SPLORP
Hmf.
NOT SO CHATTY ANYMORE, ARE YOU?

QUITE CLEVER, GISELLE.
NOT THAT I DON'T APPRECIATE IT, BUT COULD YOU HAVE PICKED A *MORE* ANNOYING SPARRING PARTNER FOR ME?
NEEZ. NADY. NU PWAY WUFF.
WHAT?
WHERE'D YOU GET THIS ONE, DARROW? SHE'S GOT SOMETHING EXTRA.
I SAID, "JEEZ, LADY, YOU PLAY ROUGH."
I THOUGHT THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A FRIENDLY LITTLE TRAINING SESSION. BUT...
...YOW!
SHE DOES AT THAT.
I'LL BE IN TOUCH IF I NEED YOU AGAIN.
YEAH. DO THAT.

HEY, EVERYTHING OKAY? YOU SEEM A LITTLE PREOCCUPIED LATELY.
DARROW?
NOT KEEPING SECRETS FROM ME, ARE YOU?
Hm?
Oh. NO.
NO, OF COURSE NOT.
MY APOLOGIES IF I'VE BEEN A BIT DISTRACTED.
JUST *THINGS*... ON MY MIND.
STILL QUITE THE MYSTERY MAN, THOUGH, AREN'T YOU?
YOU REALLY THINK SO?
I'M TRUTHFULLY NOT ALL THAT INTERESTING, GISELLE. NOT HALF SO INTERESTING AS *YOU*.
...YOU AND THIS POWER OF YOURS WE'VE BEEN HONING.
WAS THIS A HELPFUL EXERCISE, BRINGING YOU TO THE SPIRIT PLANE?
I APPRECIATE *ALL* THE HELP YOU'VE GIVEN ME. I'LL HAVE TO PUT IT TO USE IF THE RUMOR ABOUT ANIMORA IS TRUE.
THE RANTINGS OF THE ASTRAL MASTER? I FRANKLY WOULDN'T PUT MUCH STOCK IN IT, CONSIDERING THE SOURCE.

I'LL TRY NOT TO TAKE OFFENSE...
...CONSIDERING THE SOURCE.
HELLO, GISELLE.
YOUR PROGRESS CONTINUES TO BE IMPRESSIVE.
Ah. THE SPIRITS ARRIVE.
I'M TRYING ANYWAY.
ALAIN, DO YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT ANIMORA? HAVE ANY OF YOU...SENSED HER? ANYTHING LIKE THAT?
WE'RE RECEPTACLES OF KNOWLEDGE, GISELLE. WE'RE NOT OMNISCIENT.
USURPING ANIMORA'S ENERGIES ALLOWED US TO LIVE ON IN SPIRIT FORM, BUT WE HAVE NO SPECIAL SENSITIVITY TO—
IF...
...WELL, IF YOU THINK WE SHOULD.
I DO.
LOVE TO STAY AND CHAT, BUT I THINK IT'S TIME WE HEADED BACK TO THE CATHEDRAL.
WOULDN'T YOU AGREE, GISELLE?
THERE'S STILL A GOOD DEAL OF THE DAY LEFT...

...AND SO MUCH TO ACCOMPLISH.
THANKS.
REALLY.
DON'T MENTION IT.

THINK I'LL GO FIND MY SISTER AND SEE HOW SHE'S DOING.
IF YOU DON'T MIND, OF COURSE.
OF COURSE NOT. WE CAN STAY HERE AT THE CATHEDRAL AS LONG AS YOU LIKE.
IN FACT...
...TAKE YOUR TIME.
MEEP!
STAY RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE YOU MANGY LITTLE BEAST.
THOSE *ORANGE EYES* HAVE STARED AT ME FOR THE LAST TIME.
BUT...
...WHERE DID IT *GO?*

...AND THIS MAKES IT OFFICIAL.

IN RETURN FOR FREE PASSAGE THROUGH YOUR HOME PLANE, THE DONADI RECEIVE RIGHT OF FIRST REFUSAL ON ALL NOUVEAU REQUESTS TO DRAW UPON THE ETHEREAL RESERVE.
I HOPE YOU'RE AS PLEASED WITH THIS AGREEMENT AS I AM.
HISTORICALLY, DOING BUSINESS WITH THE NOUVEAU GUILD HAS BEEN TO OUR MUTUAL ADVANTAGE. IT REMAINS SO.
A BETTER CHOICE OF GUILD MASTER COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MADE.
THAT'S KIND OF YOU TO SAY.

FEEL FREE TO AVAIL YOURSELF OF THE CATHEDRAL'S AMENITIES FOR AS LONG AS YOU LIKE.
THANK YOU, BUT WE TAKE OUR LEAVE. TO REMAIN LONG UPON YOUR PLANE IS...
...DISCONCERTING...
...TO US.

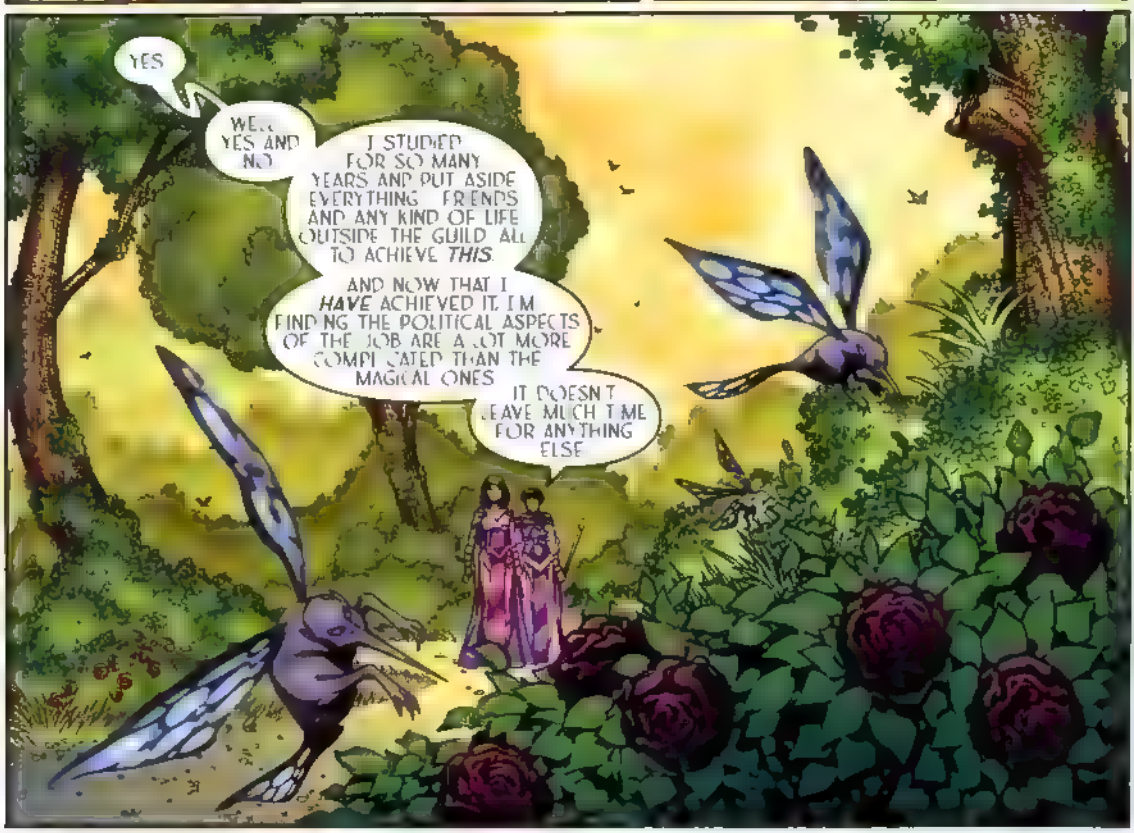
DEFTLY HANDLED, GUILD MASTER.
THE DWELLERS OF THE DONADI PLANE ARE NOTORIOUSLY DIFFICULT NEGOTIATORS.
THANKS.
I'M FINALLY STARTING TO FEEL LIKE I'M GETTING A HANDLE ON THIS JOB.

GEN?
ANY TIME IN YOUR SCHEDULE FOR WAYWARD SISTERS?
NOK
SPARRING SESSION'S OVER?
YEAH I THINK I'M GETTING A HANDLE ON THIS JOB
I JUST SAID THAT
Huh?
NEVERMIND
HOW'D THE NEGOTIATION GO?
FINE, JUST FINE
THOUGH I WOULDN'T MIND HAVING THAT SPIRIT IN YOUR HEAD THROW A LITTLE ADVICE MY WAY ONCE IN A WHILE
COME ON, I COULD USE A BREAK
WHAT? WHERE ARE WE
JUST COME ON
I HATE IT WHEN SHE DOES THIS

THAT'S BETTER
I SPENT SO MUCH TIME HERE AS A GIRL
ESPECIALLY AFTER MOM AND DAD DIED...
THIS GROVE FEELS MORE LIKE HOME TO ME THAN ANY OTHER PLACE I CAN THINK OF
I GUESS IT SEEMED *SAFE* HERE THE WORLD MADE *SENSE* HERE

AND NOW I'M GUILD MASTER
FOR SO LONG I DIDN'T LET MYSELF BELIEVE IT WOULD EVER REALLY HAPPEN

I'M GLAD IT FINALLY DID, GEN. YOU DESERVE IT AFTER ALL THE WORK YOU PUT INTO PURSUING IT.
IS IT WHAT YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD BE?


YES
WELL... YES AND NO
I STUDIED FOR SO MANY YEARS AND PUT ASIDE EVERYTHING - FRIENDS AND ANY KIND OF LIFE OUTSIDE THE GUILD ALL TO ACHIEVE *THIS*.
AND NOW THAT I *HAVE* ACHIEVED IT, I'M FINDING THE POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE JOB ARE A LOT MORE COMPLICATED THAN THE MAGICAL ONES.
IT DOESN'T LEAVE MUCH TIME FOR ANYTHING ELSE.

YOU NEVER *WERE* A SOCIAL BUTTERFLY
NO BUT YOU MORE THAN MADE UP FOR ME IN THAT DEPARTMENT, DIDN'T YOU?
I'M SAYING I'D AT LEAST LIKE THE *CHANCE* FOR A LIFE OUTSIDE THE GUILD I DON'T WANT TO WAKE UP ONE MORNING AND REALIZE MY ENTIRE LIFE HAS SLIPPED PAST ME
DID YOU EVER HEAR FROM THAT ARTIST WHO WAS SO OBVIOUSLY TAKEN WITH YOU? WHAT WAS HIS NAME?
THIERRY?
HE SEEMED NICE ENOUGH BUT NO, I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM SINCE THAT NIGHT AT THE WATERFRONT
WHY? INTERESTED?
WHO? *ME?*
WITH AN ARTIST? *NO,* I WAS JUST
YOU KNOW JUST CURIOUS ASKING IF YOU'D SEEN HIM THAT'S ALL
JUST CURIOUS Uh huh
I'M PERFECTLY HAPPY WITH DARROW ANYWAY I KNOW YOU'RE STILL NOT REAL FOND OF HIM, BUT
WHEN I'M WITH HIM IT'S LIKE SOMETHING COMES OVER ME I JUST FEEL
CONTENT
AS LONG AS WE'RE PLAYING TRUE CONFESSIONS I'LL BE HONEST I *DO* HAVE MISGIVINGS ABOUT HIM
HE JUST FEELS *WRONG* TO ME. THREATENING, SOMEHOW
DARROW'S BEEN NOTHING BUT A GENTLEMAN. IF THERE'S A *THREAT* IT'S ANIMORA
ASSUMING WHAT THE ASTRAL MASTER TOLD US IS TRUE
LET'S FACE IT MONDRUS NOT THE MOST RELIABLE SOURCE
I'VE HAD NOUVEAU ADEPTS CASTING SEARCH SPELLS FOR ANY HINT OF [illegible] AND THEY'VE FOUND NOTHING

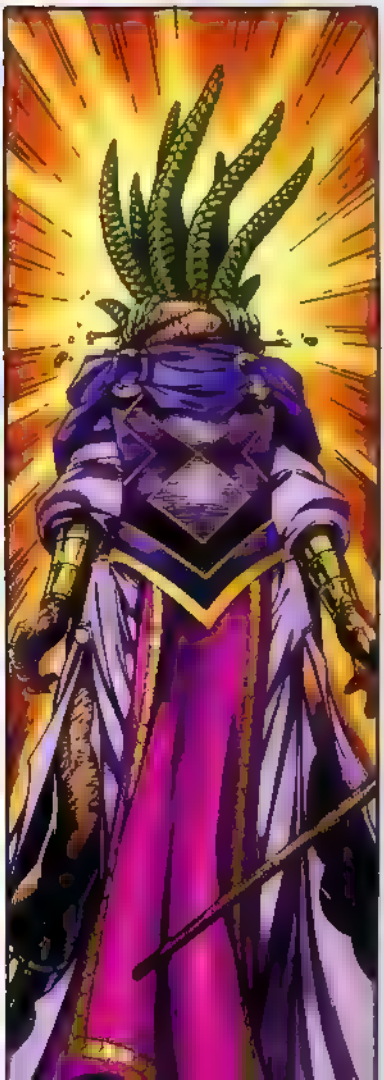
RIGHT WHERE YOU SAID SHE'D BE
GUILD MASTER VILLARD, PLEASE, WE'RE YOUR BODYGUARDS

WHEN YOU DISAPPEAR LIKE THAT IT MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO DO OUR JOBS
YOU'RE RIGHT MY APOLOGIES

WE UNDERSTAND YOU NEED YOUR PRIVACY BUT WE NEED TO KNOW WHERE--
KOFF

GHHK?!

GAAHLG!



IT'S GOOD TO MAKE AN ENTRANCE, DON'T YOU THINK?

IT'S REALLY HER, I'S
ANIMORA
GET TO THE CATHEDRAL, MASTER VILLARD! I'LL DO WHAT I CAN TO -
EYAAH!
I HAVE NO INTEREST IN DEALING WITH PAWNS
SHE'S HERE FOR ME, GEN
SHE'S GOT TO BE HERE FOR ME!
SHE'LL GET BOTH OF US, ELLE!

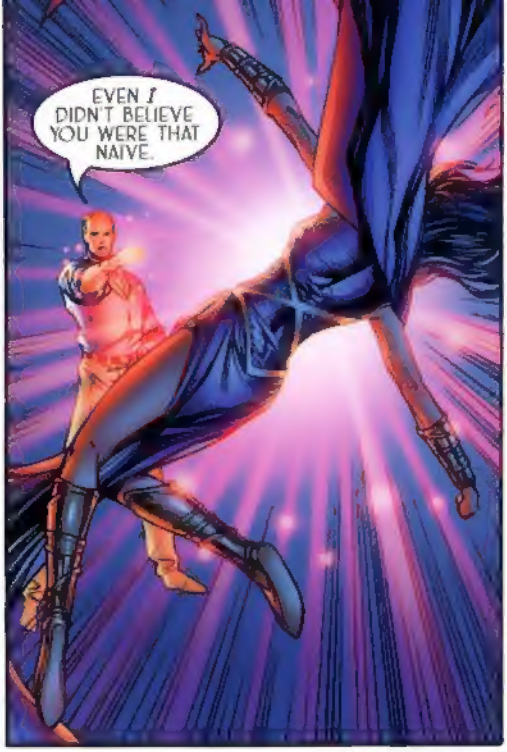
HNF!
YOU'RE NOT THE ONE
IT'S YOUR SISTER I WANT
THEN CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR
GISELLE EVEN WITH THE POWER YOU WIELD, ANIMORA IS NOT AN OPPONENT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY
OUR COMBINED MIGHT WAS BARELY ENOUGH TO HARNESS HER CENTURIES AGO
YEAH, WELL I'D BETTER BE ABLE TO COUNT ON THE SEVEN OF YOU THIS TIME
WHOA
AFF

FOUL BEAST!
MONDRUS
YOUR EVIL WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO SPREAD ACROSS THE WORLD!
MY FELLOW MASTERS WERE MAD TO HAVE UNFETTERED YOU!
QUITE TRUE THEY HELD THE KEY TO MY PRISON
HOW UNFORTUNATE *YOU'RE* THE FIRST TO PAY FOR THEIR MISTAKE
THE GOOD SPIRITS IMPRISONED YOU FIVE HUNDRED YEARS AGO
THEY'LL HELP ME DO IT *AGAIN!*
GHH

NNNF
YOU DON'T LACK FOR FORTITUDE. YOU REMIND ME OF *MYSELF* ONCE
UNDERSTAND I HOLD NO PERSONAL ANIMOSITY TOWARD YOU
THAT MAKES ME FEEL *SO* MUCH BETTER
COME ON, MONDRU ON YOUR FEET
WE'RE NOT GOING TO BEAT ANIMORA
MNF
WITH YOUR DEMISE ALL CIRESS BELONGS TO ME
AND I'LL HAVE MY VENGEANCE UPON THOSE WHO LOCKED ME AWAY
EXPECTING ME TO JUST ROLL OVER AND PLAY DEAD? WE'RE
WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE
GEN?
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
GISELLE

...SHE'S COMING.
THIS WORLD IS MY STEPPING STONE...
...AND NEITHER YOU NOR ANYONE ELSE CAN STAND IN MY WAY.
WNF!
ANIMORA MEANS TO DESTROY US ALL. OUR EXISTENCE DEPENDS ON THIS... THIS NOVICE!
THEN IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN SELF-PRESERVATION, MAGUS, AID HER.
GEN'S STAFF OF OFFICE?
I'LL USE WHATEVER I CAN GET MY...
...HANDS ON.
DARROW!
I NEED YOUR HELP! ANIMORAS HERE AND—
I KNOW.
I MADE SURE YOU WERE HERE SO SHE COULD FIND YOU.

YOU...
...YOU WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
DO I TRULY HAVE TO SPELL IT OUT FOR YOU?


EVEN I DIDN'T BELIEVE YOU WERE THAT NAIVE.

YOU USED ME!
ALL THIS TIME YOU WERE USING ME, YOU SON OF A—

KRUNCH

LANGUAGE.
AT LEAST TAKE COMFORT IN KNOWING YOU WERE BEATEN BY YOUR BETTERS.
YOU NEVER HAD A CHANCE.

AND NEITHER DOES THIS PLANET.

BOOM

WELL.
THAT WAS FAIRLY THOROUGH.
WHAT'S NEXT?
Oh, THE USUAL.
CONQUER THE WORLD.